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ABSTRACT

This paper describes the background characteristics, experiences and outcomes of Connecticut vocational-technical high school graduates that attend Connecticut Community Colleges and, where appropriate, compares them with graduates of Connecticut public comprehensive high schools. The sample for this study includes students who graduated from Connecticut vocational-technical high schools in the spring of 1999, 2000, and 2001 and attended community college in the fall semester of the same year. The comparison group includes peer equivalents from the comprehensive high schools. Using this definition, vocational-technical high school graduate enrollment has increased by 34% over the last three years. Comprehensive high school graduate enrollment has increased by 21% over the same time period. The proportion of men and women included in both groups is statistically similar (roughly 50% each). The vocational-technical high school graduates attending the community colleges include a larger percentage of minority students than the comprehensive high school graduates. Overall, part-time students from both groups tend to be older than the full-time students. For the vocational-technical high school group, there has been a steady increase in full-time community college enrollment since 1999. The data suggest that high school type is not related to future academic performance at the Connecticut Community Colleges. (RC)

Vocational-Technical High School Graduates that Attend Connecticut Community Colleges: Who are they? Are they Successful?

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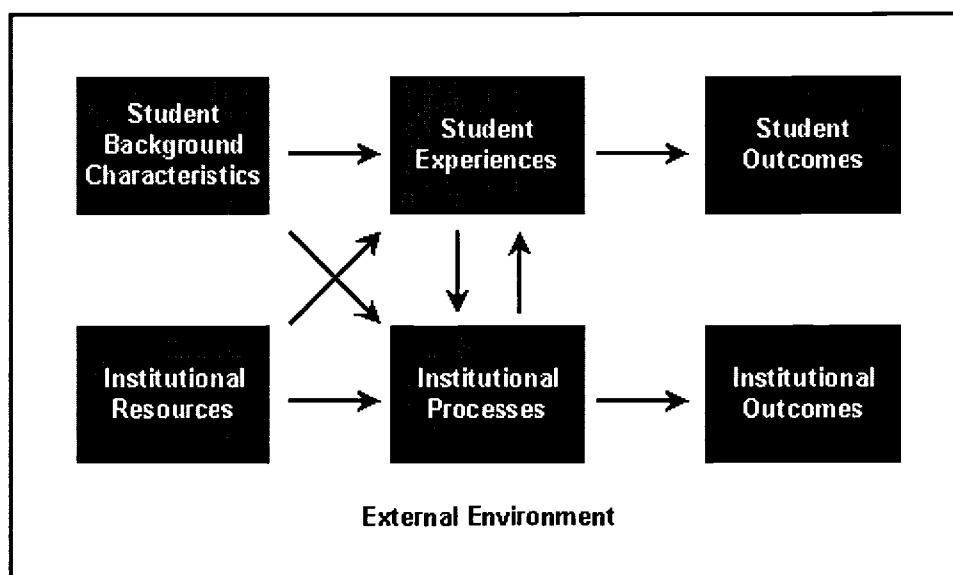
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Dr. Corby A. Coperthwaite  
Office of Planning and Assessment  
Board of Trustees  
Connecticut Community-Technical Colleges  
61 Woodland Street  
Hartford, Connecticut 06105  
~~~~~

Phone: (860) 725-6604
Fax: (860) 566-1308
CCoperthwaite@commnet.edu
www.commnet.edu/co/planning
~~~~~

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## Executive Summary

This paper describes the background characteristics, experiences and outcomes of Connecticut vocational-technical high school graduates that attend Connecticut Community Colleges and, where appropriate, compares them with graduates of Connecticut public comprehensive high schools. The issues surrounding preparedness are beyond the scope of this study.

The sample for this study includes students who graduated from Connecticut vocational-technical high schools in the spring of 1999, 2000 and 2001 and attended a community college in the fall semester of the same year. The comparison group includes peer equivalents from the comprehensive high schools. Using this definition, vocational-technical high school graduate enrollment in Connecticut community colleges has increased by 34% over the last three years. Comprehensive high school graduate enrollment has increased by 21% over the same time period.

The proportion of men and women included in both groups is statistically similar (roughly 50% each). The vocational-technical high school graduates attending the community colleges include a larger percentage of minority students than the comprehensive high school graduates. This difference can be attributed to a higher proportion of Hispanic students. Overall, part-time students from both groups tend to be older than the full-time students. For the vocational-technical high school group, there has been a steady increase in full-time community college enrollment since 1999.

There is little evidence found in the available data to suggest that vocational-technical students are any more or less successful than their peers from the comprehensive high schools. For the fall of 2000 and 2001 the first semester grade point average for full-time students from the vocational-technical high school graduates was statistically higher than that of the comprehensive high school graduates; the difference between a C+ (2.30) and a C (2.0). There are no differences between groups with respect to persistence from beginning of term to end of term. With the exception of part-time students from cohort year 2000, there are no significant differences between groups with respect to one-semester retention rates. There are no differences between groups with respect to annual retention rates. This study does not attempt to address the level of preparation for college demonstrated by either group of students. A separate investigation will deal with preparedness.

The data suggest that high school type is not related to future academic performance at the Connecticut Community Colleges. As a system, we should move forward with articulation discussions and do more to better inform all Connecticut high schools concerning the success of their graduates.

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## Introduction

The Connecticut Community College System and Connecticut vocational-technical high schools continue to address high school, community college and beyond (2+2+2) transition issues and programs. To inform these efforts, it is important that we know the demographics of these students, how prepared they are for college level studies and ultimately how successful they are at the community colleges.

This paper describes the background characteristics, experiences and outcomes of Connecticut vocational-technical high school graduates that attend Connecticut Community Colleges and, where appropriate, compares them with graduates of Connecticut public comprehensive high schools. The issues surrounding preparedness are beyond the scope of this study.

## Data Sources and Elements

Data is abstracted from official reporting snapshots taken during the third week of a semester or at the end of a semester. Data elements include student background characteristics (type of high school attended, gender, ethnicity, and age), student experiences (credit hours attempted; full- or part-time enrollment), and student outcomes (persistence, first semester grade point average and retention).

## Student Background Characteristics

The sample for this study includes students who graduated from Connecticut vocational-technical high schools in the spring of 1999, 2000 and 2001 and attended a community college in the fall semester of the same year. The comparison group includes peer equivalents from the comprehensive high schools. Using this definition, vocational-technical high school graduate enrollment in Connecticut community colleges has increased by 34% over the last three years. Comprehensive high school graduate enrollment has increased by 21% over the same time period.

**Table 1 Student Enrollment**

|                                          | Fall 1999 | Fall 2000 | Fall 2001 |
|------------------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| <b>Vocational-Technical High Schools</b> | 191       | 238       | 256       |
| <b>Comprehensive High Schools</b>        | 2523      | 3064      | 3162      |

Table 2 on the next page displays enrollments by feeder vocational-technical high school. Platt, Bullard Havens, and Kaynor are the top three vocational-technical high school feeder institutions for the community colleges. On average, approximately 50% of the students are female and 50% male. There were no significant differences between groups with respect to gender (see Table 3 on the next page).

**Table 2 Headcount Enrollment**

| HS Name                           | 1999       | 2000       | 2001       | Total      |
|-----------------------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Platt Reg Voc Tech                | 30         | 27         | 28         | 85         |
| Bullard Havens Reg Voc Tech       | 24         | 23         | 31         | 78         |
| W F Kaynor Reg Voc Tech           | 15         | 28         | 21         | 64         |
| O Wolcott Reg Voc Tech            | 16         | 18         | 17         | 51         |
| E C Goodwin Reg Voc Tech          | 7          | 22         | 16         | 45         |
| H Cheney Reg Voc Tech             | 14         | 12         | 13         | 39         |
| A I Prince Reg Voc Tech           | 7          | 18         | 14         | 39         |
| Eli Whitney Reg Voc Tech          | 12         | 11         | 15         | 38         |
| H H Ellis Reg Voc Tech            | 9          | 8          | 18         | 35         |
| H C Wilcox Tech Sch               | 12         | 12         | 8          | 32         |
| Windham Reg Voc Tech              | 7          | 13         | 10         | 30         |
| J M Wright Reg Voc Tech           | 8          | 8          | 13         | 29         |
| Grasso Se Reg Voc Tech            | 4          | 11         | 13         | 28         |
| E O'Brien Reg Voc Tech            | 7          | 8          | 10         | 25         |
| Vinal Reg Voc Tech                | 7          | 6          | 8          | 21         |
| H Abbott Reg Voc Tech             | 7          | 7          | 7          | 21         |
| Norwich Reg Voc Tech              | 2          | 6          | 12         | 20         |
| E C Goodwin Bristol Sat           | 3          | 0          | 2          | 5          |
| <b>Voc-Tech High School Total</b> | <b>191</b> | <b>238</b> | <b>256</b> | <b>685</b> |

**Table 3 Enrollment by Gender**

|                                          |                | 1999 | 2000 | 2001 | Total |
|------------------------------------------|----------------|------|------|------|-------|
| <b>Vocational-Technical High Schools</b> |                |      |      |      |       |
|                                          | <b>Females</b> | 104  | 115  | 126  | 345   |
|                                          |                | 54%  | 48%  | 49%  | 50%   |
|                                          | <b>Males</b>   | 87   | 123  | 130  | 340   |
|                                          |                | 46%  | 52%  | 51%  | 50%   |
|                                          | <b>Total</b>   | 191  | 238  | 256  | 685   |
|                                          |                |      |      |      |       |
|                                          |                | 1999 | 2000 | 2001 | Total |
| <b>Comprehensive High Schools</b>        |                |      |      |      |       |
|                                          | <b>Females</b> | 1307 | 1584 | 1667 | 4558  |
|                                          |                | 52%  | 52%  | 53%  | 52%   |
|                                          | <b>Males</b>   | 1216 | 1480 | 1495 | 4191  |
|                                          |                | 48%  | 48%  | 47%  | 48%   |
|                                          | <b>Total</b>   | 2523 | 3064 | 3162 | 8749  |

Table 4 provides ethnicity data. There is a higher percentage of minority students in the sample from the vocational-technical high schools than from the comprehensive high schools. This difference can be attributed to the higher proportion of Hispanic students from the vocational-technical high schools.

**Table 4 Enrollment by Ethnicity**

|                                          |                                            | 1999        | 2000        | 2001         |
|------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|
| <b>Vocational-Technical High Schools</b> |                                            |             |             |              |
|                                          | <b>American Indian/<br/>Alaskan Native</b> | 2 (1%)      |             | 1 (0%)       |
|                                          | <b>Asian/Pacific Islander</b>              | 1 (1%)      | 2 (1%)      | 2 (1%)       |
|                                          | <b>Black, non-Hispanic</b>                 | 23 (12%)    | 49 (21%)    | 45 (18%)     |
|                                          | <b>Caucasian,<br/>Non-Hispanic</b>         | 105 (55%)   | 119 (50%)   | 141 (55%)    |
|                                          | <b>Hispanic</b>                            | 46 (24%)    | 56 (24%)    | 53 (21%)     |
|                                          | <b>Unknown Ethnic Group</b>                | 14 (7%)     | 12 (5%)     | 14 (5%)      |
|                                          | <b>Total Minority</b>                      | *72 (38%)   | **107 (45%) | ***101 (39%) |
|                                          | <b>Total</b>                               | 191         | 238         | 256          |
|                                          |                                            |             |             |              |
|                                          |                                            | <b>1999</b> | <b>2000</b> | <b>2001</b>  |
| <b>Comprehensive High Schools</b>        |                                            |             |             |              |
|                                          | <b>American Indian/<br/>Alaskan Native</b> | 9 (0%)      | 11 (0%)     | 11 (0%)      |
|                                          | <b>Asian/Pacific Islander</b>              | 57(2%)      | 88 (3%)     | 81 (3%)      |
|                                          | <b>Black, non-Hispanic</b>                 | 288 (11%)   | 394 (13%)   | 465 (15%)    |
|                                          | <b>Caucasian,<br/>Non-Hispanic</b>         | 1738 (69%)  | 2011 (66%)  | 2021 (64%)   |
|                                          | <b>Hispanic</b>                            | 293 (12%)   | 388 (13%)   | 399 (13%)    |
|                                          | <b>Unknown Ethnic Group</b>                | 138 (5%)    | 172 (6%)    | 185 (6%)     |
|                                          | <b>Total Minority</b>                      | *647 (26%)  | **881 (29%) | ***956 (30%) |
|                                          | <b>Total</b>                               | 2523        | 3064        | 3162         |

\*  $\chi^2 (1, N=2714)=13.24, p<.05$

\*\*  $\chi^2 (1, N=3302)=27.66, p<.05$

\*\*\*  $\chi^2 (1, N=2714)= 9.42, p<.05$

Table 5 displays enrollment by age. There are no significant differences between groups with respect to this variable; however, for both groups, the part-time students tend to be older than full-time students.

**Table 5 Enrollment by Age**

|                                          |                  | <b>*1999</b> | <b>**2000</b> | <b>***2001</b> |
|------------------------------------------|------------------|--------------|---------------|----------------|
| <b>Vocational-Technical High Schools</b> |                  |              |               |                |
|                                          | <b>Full-time</b> | 18.05        | 18.01         | 18.12          |
|                                          | <b>Part-time</b> | 18.15        | 18.41         | 18.14          |
|                                          | <b>Total</b>     | 18.09        | 18.15         | 18.12          |
| <b>Comprehensive High Schools</b>        |                  |              |               |                |
|                                          | <b>Full-time</b> | 18.10        | 18.16         | 18.17          |
|                                          | <b>Part-time</b> | 18.54        | 18.52         | 19.64          |
|                                          | <b>Total</b>     | 18.22        | 18.26         | 18.59          |

\*All part-time students: N = 811, M = 18.50, SD = 2.50, t (2708) = -6.15, p < .05

\*\*All part-time students: N = 941, M = 18.51, SD = 2.63, t (3299) = -5.87, p < .05

\*\*\*All part-time students: N = 990, M = 19.52, SD = 1.19, t (3416) = -2.32, p < .05

## Student Experiences

In the fall of 1999 the percentage of comprehensive high school graduates enrolled full-time was significantly higher than their peers from the vocational-technical high schools. There were no significant differences between the two groups for the fall of 2000 and 2001. However, for the vocational-technical high school group, there has been a steady increase in full-time community college enrollments since 1999 (see Table 6).

**Table 6 Enrollment by Credits Attempted**

|                                          |                  | <b>1999</b> | <b>2000</b> | <b>2001</b> |
|------------------------------------------|------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| <b>Vocational-Technical High Schools</b> |                  |             |             |             |
|                                          | <b>Full-time</b> | *118        | 158         | 180         |
|                                          |                  | 62%         | 66%         | 70%         |
|                                          | <b>Part-time</b> | 73          | 80          | 76          |
|                                          |                  | 38%         | 34%         | 30%         |
|                                          | <b>Total</b>     | 191         | 238         | 256         |
| <b>Comprehensive High Schools</b>        |                  |             |             |             |
|                                          | <b>Full-time</b> | *1782       | 2202        | 2248        |
|                                          |                  | 71%         | 72%         | 71%         |
|                                          | <b>Part-time</b> | 741         | 862         | 914         |
|                                          |                  | 29%         | 28%         | 29%         |
|                                          | <b>Total</b>     | 2523        | 3064        | 3162        |

\* $\chi^2(1, N=2714)=6.62, p<.05$



## Student Outcomes

For the purpose of this study, persistence is defined as the percentage of first-time, full-time and first-time part-time students who complete at least one course with a grade of A, B, C, D, or Pass or Audit in a given semester. Over time, there are no significant differences between groups with respect to persistence from the beginning of term (BOT) to the end of term (EOT) for full-time (FT), part-time (PT) and total students.

**Table 7 Persistence: Beginning (BOT) to End (EOT) of Term**

| <b>Full-Time Students</b>         |                         |             |             |             |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
|                                   |                         | <b>1999</b> | <b>2000</b> | <b>2001</b> |
| Vocational-Technical High Schools |                         |             |             |             |
|                                   | <b>BOT</b>              | 118         | 158         | 180         |
|                                   | <b>EOT</b>              | 114         | 155         | 175         |
|                                   | <b>Persistence Rate</b> | 97%         | 98%         | 97%         |
| Comprehensive High Schools        |                         |             |             |             |
|                                   | <b>BOT</b>              | 1782        | 2202        | 2248        |
|                                   | <b>EOT</b>              | 1760        | 2130        | 2165        |
|                                   | <b>Persistence Rate</b> | 99%         | 97%         | 96%         |
| <b>Part-Time Students</b>         |                         |             |             |             |
|                                   |                         | <b>1999</b> | <b>2000</b> | <b>2001</b> |
| Vocational-Technical High Schools |                         |             |             |             |
|                                   | <b>BOT</b>              | 73          | 80          | 76          |
|                                   | <b>EOT</b>              | 71          | 74          | 74          |
|                                   | <b>Persistence Rate</b> | 97%         | 93%         | 98%         |
| Comprehensive High Schools        |                         |             |             |             |
|                                   | <b>BOT</b>              | 741         | 862         | 914         |
|                                   | <b>EOT</b>              | 726         | 814         | 866         |
|                                   | <b>Persistence Rate</b> | 98%         | 94%         | 95%         |
| <b>All Students</b>               |                         |             |             |             |
|                                   |                         | <b>1999</b> | <b>2000</b> | <b>2001</b> |
| Vocational-Technical High Schools |                         |             |             |             |
|                                   | <b>BOT</b>              | 191         | 238         | 256         |
|                                   | <b>EOT</b>              | 185         | 229         | 249         |
|                                   | <b>Persistence Rate</b> | 97%         | 96%         | 97%         |
| Comprehensive High Schools        |                         |             |             |             |
|                                   | <b>BOT</b>              | 2523        | 3064        | 3162        |
|                                   | <b>EOT</b>              | 2486        | 2944        | 3031        |
|                                   | <b>Persistence Rate</b> | 99%         | 96%         | 96%         |

Table 8 illustrates that for full-time college students in the fall of 2000 and 2001, the first semester grade point average of the vocational-technical high school graduates was statistically higher than their comprehensive high school graduate peers; the difference between a C+ (2.30) and a C (2.0).

**Table 8 First Semester Grade Point Average**

|                                          |                  | 1999 | 2000  | 2001   |
|------------------------------------------|------------------|------|-------|--------|
| <b>Vocational-Technical High Schools</b> |                  |      |       |        |
|                                          | <b>Full-time</b> | 2.08 | *2.27 | **2.38 |
|                                          | <b>Part-time</b> | 1.73 | 1.70  | 1.82   |
|                                          | <b>Total</b>     | 1.95 | 2.09  | 2.21   |
| <b>Comprehensive High Schools</b>        |                  |      |       |        |
|                                          | <b>Full-time</b> | 2.04 | *2.08 | **2.17 |
|                                          | <b>Part-time</b> | 1.65 | 1.71  | 1.90   |
|                                          | <b>Total</b>     | 1.92 | 1.98  | 2.09   |

\*Full-time voc-tech students:  $N = 155$ ,  $M = 2.27$ ,  $SD = 1.16$ ,  $t(2283) = -1.982$ ,  $p < .05$

\*\*Full-time voc-tech students:  $N = 175$ ,  $M = 2.38$ ,  $SD = 2.50$ ,  $t(2338) = -2.482$ ,  $p < .05$

For cohort years 1999 and 2001 there are no significant differences between groups with respect to one-semester retention rates (see Table 9). For the part-time students in cohort year 2000, the one semester retention rate for the vocational-technical graduates was significantly higher than that of the comprehensive high school graduates. For full-time students from the vocational-technical high school cohorts, there has been a steady increase in one-semester retention rates since 1999.

**Table 9 One-Semester Retention: Fall-to-Consecutive Spring**

|                                          |                            |             |             |             |
|------------------------------------------|----------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| <b>Full-Time Students</b>                |                            |             |             |             |
|                                          |                            | <b>1999</b> | <b>2000</b> | <b>2001</b> |
| <b>Vocational-Technical High Schools</b> |                            |             |             |             |
|                                          | <b>Full-time</b>           | 118         | 158         | 180         |
|                                          | <b>Returning in Spring</b> | 86          | 124         | 150         |
|                                          | <b>Retention Rate</b>      | 73%         | 79%         | 83%         |
| <b>Comprehensive High Schools</b>        |                            |             |             |             |
|                                          | <b>Full-time</b>           | 1782        | 2202        | 2248        |
|                                          | <b>Returning in Spring</b> | 1374        | 1671        | 1778        |
|                                          | <b>Retention Rate</b>      | 77%         | 76%         | 79%         |
| <b>Part-Time Students</b>                |                            |             |             |             |
|                                          |                            | <b>1999</b> | <b>2000</b> | <b>2001</b> |
| <b>Vocational-Technical High Schools</b> |                            |             |             |             |
|                                          | <b>Part-time</b>           | 73          | 80          | 76          |
|                                          | <b>Returning in Spring</b> | 42          | *54         | 46          |
|                                          | <b>Retention Rate</b>      | 58%         | 68%         | 61%         |
| <b>Comprehensive High Schools</b>        |                            |             |             |             |
|                                          | <b>Part-time</b>           | 741         | 862         | 914         |
|                                          | <b>Returning in Spring</b> | 446         | *496        | 547         |
|                                          | <b>Retention Rate</b>      | 60%         | 58%         | 60%         |

**Table 9 Once-Semester Retention: Fall-to-Consecutive Spring (Continued)**

| <b>All Students</b>               |                            |             |             |             |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
|                                   |                            | <b>1999</b> | <b>2000</b> | <b>2001</b> |
| Vocational-Technical High Schools |                            |             |             |             |
|                                   | <b>All Students</b>        | 191         | 238         | 256         |
|                                   | <b>Returning in Spring</b> | 128         | 178         | 196         |
|                                   | <b>Retention Rate</b>      | 67%         | 75%         | 77%         |
| Comprehensive High Schools        |                            |             |             |             |
|                                   | <b>All Students</b>        | 2523        | 3064        | 3162        |
|                                   | <b>Returning in Spring</b> | 1820        | 2167        | 2325        |
|                                   | <b>Retention Rate</b>      | 72%         | 71%         | 74%         |

\*U ( $N=862, 467.52$  and  $N=80, 514.42$ ) = 31046,  $p<.05$

Over time, there are no significant differences between groups with respect to fall-to-fall, annual retention rates (see Table 10).

**Table 10 One-Year Retention: Fall-to-Fall**

| <b>Full-Time Students</b>         |                                              |             |             |             |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
|                                   |                                              | <b>1999</b> | <b>2000</b> | <b>2001</b> |
| Vocational-Technical High Schools |                                              |             |             |             |
|                                   | <b>Full-time</b>                             | 118         | 158         | 180         |
|                                   | <b>Returning the following Fall semester</b> | 60          | 94          | NA          |
|                                   | <b>Retention Rate</b>                        | 51%         | 60%         | NA          |
| Comprehensive High Schools        |                                              |             |             |             |
|                                   | <b>Full-time</b>                             | 1782        | 2202        | 2248        |
|                                   | <b>Returning the following Fall semester</b> | 1005        | 1246        | NA          |
|                                   | <b>Retention Rate</b>                        | 56%         | 57%         | NA          |
| <b>Part-Time Students</b>         |                                              |             |             |             |
|                                   |                                              | <b>1999</b> | <b>2000</b> | <b>2001</b> |
| Vocational-Technical High Schools |                                              |             |             |             |
|                                   | <b>Part-time</b>                             | 73          | 90          | 76          |
|                                   | <b>Returning the following Fall semester</b> | 33          | 40          | NA          |
|                                   | <b>Retention Rate</b>                        | 45%         | 44%         | NA          |
| Comprehensive High Schools        |                                              |             |             |             |
|                                   | <b>Part-time</b>                             | 741         | 862         | 914         |
|                                   | <b>Returning the following Fall semester</b> | 305         | 380         | NA          |
|                                   | <b>Retention Rate</b>                        | 41%         | 44%         | NA          |

**Table 10: One-Year Retention: Fall-to-Fall (Continued)**

| <b>All Students</b>                      |                                       |             |             |             |
|------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
|                                          |                                       | <b>1999</b> | <b>2000</b> | <b>2001</b> |
| <b>Vocational-Technical High Schools</b> |                                       |             |             |             |
|                                          | All Students                          | 191         | 238         | 256         |
|                                          | Returning the following Fall semester | 93          | 134         | NA          |
|                                          | Retention Rate                        | 49%         | 56%         | NA          |
| <b>Comprehensive High Schools</b>        |                                       |             |             |             |
|                                          | All Students                          | 2523        | 3064        | 3162        |
|                                          | Returning the following Fall semester | 1310        | 1626        | NA          |
|                                          | Retention Rate                        | 52%         | 53%         | NA          |

## Conclusions

Community college student enrollments from the vocational-technical high schools have increased by 34% over the past three years. The proportion of men and women included in both groups is statistically similar (roughly 50% each). The vocational-technical high school graduates attending the community colleges include a larger percentage of minority students than the comprehensive high school graduates. This difference can be attributed to a higher proportion of Hispanic students. Part-time students from both groups tend to be older than the full-time students. For the vocational-technical high school group, there has been a steady increase in full-time community college enrollments since 1999.

There is little evidence found in the available data to suggest that vocational-technical students are any more or less successful than their peers from the comprehensive high schools. For the fall of 2000 and 2001, the first semester grade point average for full-time students from the vocational-technical high school graduates was statistically higher than that of the comprehensive high school graduates; the difference between a C+ (2.30) and a C (2.0). There are no differences between groups with respect to persistence from beginning of term to end of term. With the exception of part-time students from cohort year 2000, there are no significant differences between groups with respect to one-semester retention rates. There are no differences between groups with respect to annual retention rates.

The data suggest that high school type is not related to future academic performance at the Connecticut Community Colleges. As a system, we should move forward with articulation discussions and do more to better inform all Connecticut high schools concerning the success of their graduates.



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